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ABSTRACT

Assimilation through acculturation is a central aim of education within all societies. If the society is over-assimilated, and if education fails to preserve individual creative powers, it will perish. The school, the institutionalized educational process, is assigned two central tasks: (1) the assimilation by acculturation of the neophytes within the society, and (2) the preservation of the autonomy of the individual in a mode reflective of the ideal of individualism. Two forms of alienation can thus occur: (1) alienation resulting from the failure of assimilation or sociological alienation, and (2) alienation resulting from the loss of an individual's autonomy or psychological alienation. Sociological alienation may be found in immigrants, the American Indians, the American Negroes, the poor, and possibly those physically or emotionally handicapped; artists, and intellectuals. Sociological and psychological alienation cannot always be separated. Among those who might be psychologically alienated is the worker, due to possible fragmentation of self and a search for stability. For some of the psychologically alienated, the schools attempt special programs to work with these maladjustments. (KJ)

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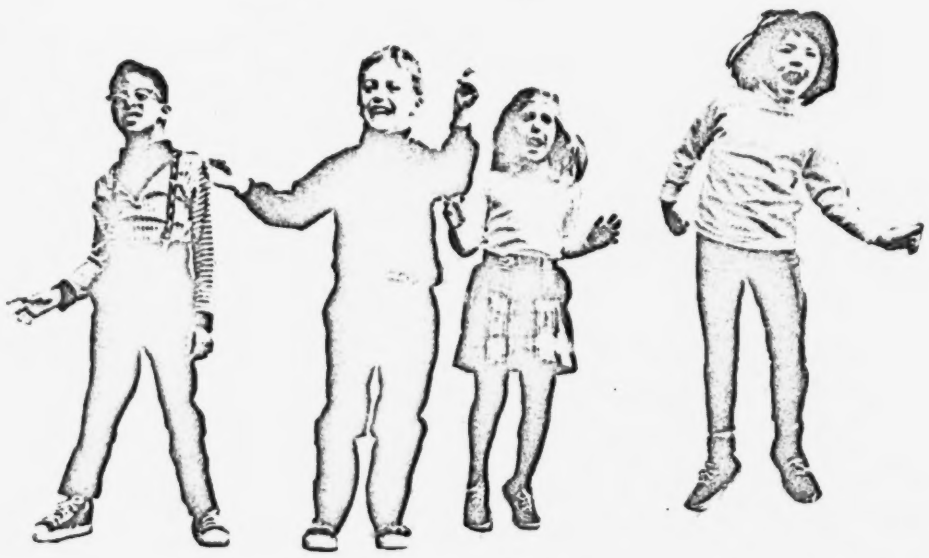

THE SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

CARLTON E. BECK
NORMAND R. BERNIER
JAMES B. MACDONALD
THOMAS W. WALTON
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
JACK C. WILLERS
Auburn University

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TO

EARL S. JOHNSON

Colleague, scholar, great teacher, and friend

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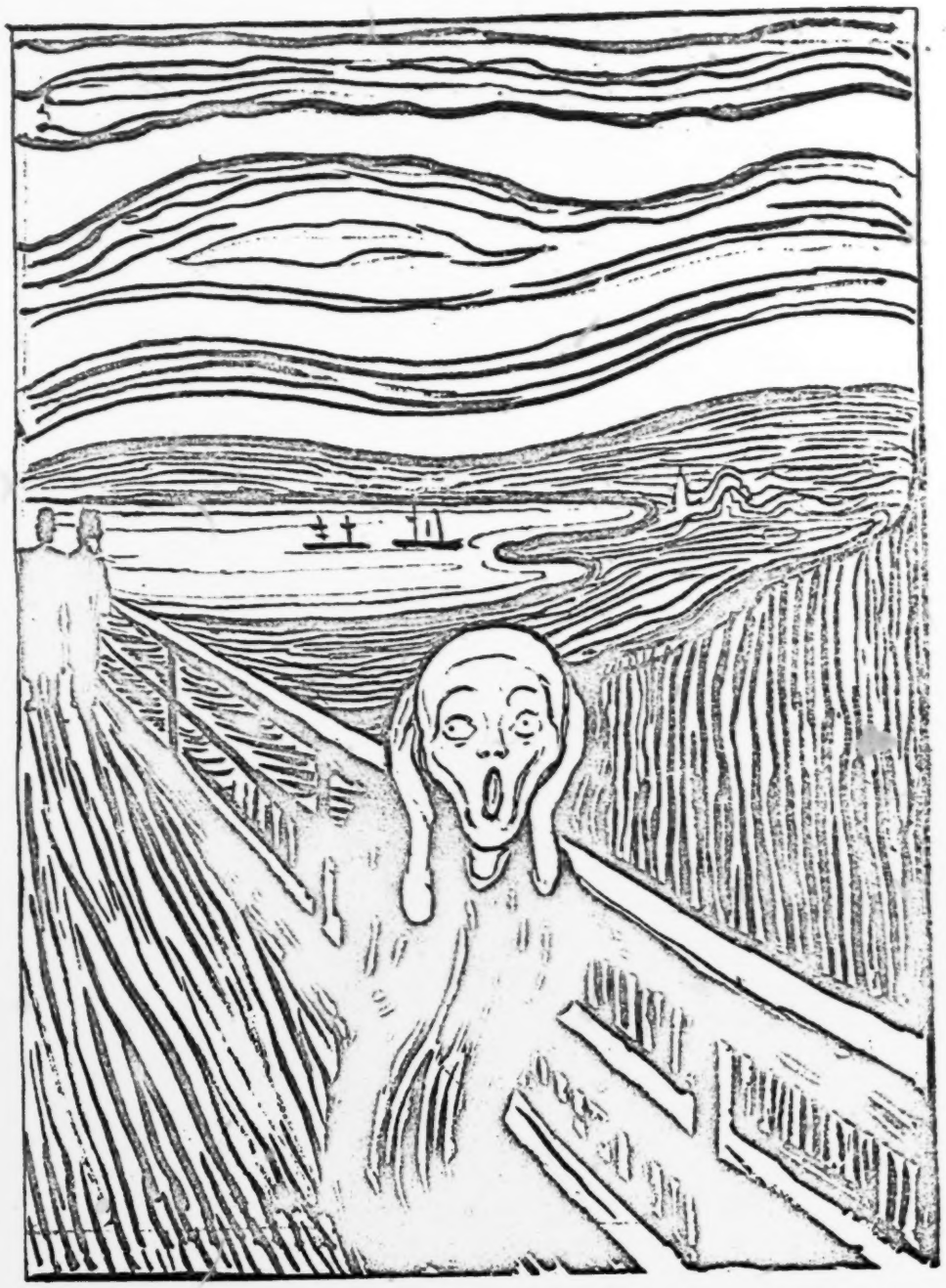


The Cry (lithograph by Edvard Munch)

Chapter Five

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ALIENATION

As was pointed out in Chapter Four, man resembles all other living organisms in that he is an open biological system in a continuous state of interchange with the physical environment. Through a constant process of inflow and outflow of energy an organism sustains its life. Man, unlike other living organisms, is also an open, "non-organic" system. He must feed upon an interchange of cognitive and affective energies to survive. Without aesthetic, spiritual, intellectual and emotional stimulation from his fellow human beings he cannot become or remain human. Thus, man depends upon groups to achieve his unique form in the hierarchy of life. Indeed, his humanness can be determined solely within a societal context.

Man, the most complex social animal, is also identified by his remarkable and quite perverse propensity for unsocial behavior. Lacking the instinctual characteristics necessary to ensure the preservation of order within his societies and yet dependent upon the survival of societies for his own existence, he creates culture. Culture, the cement that maintains order within societies, is in fact the personality of social systems. It is because of culture that

societies can survive the perpetual onslaught of death which eventually immobilizes each of its members.

The knowledge required for survival by a generation of men is not transmitted to his progeny through organic heredity as it is in the case of other animals. Man deliberately and continuously must struggle to ensure that the elements of his cultures which preserve his societies will not perish. Education is his unique way of dealing with the fact that *nature* "tricked" him by providing him with a somewhat ineffective genetic system. *Nurture* furnishes man, a rather physiologically fragile creature, with the "survival kit" needed to preserve the existence of his species.

Social Assimilation and Education

The primary aim of education in all societies is to transmit a "selective brand of civilization" to its members. Each individual within a society must be able not only to identify and describe the personality of his culture but also to internalize it. All aliens, the newly arrived by birth or migration, or those who do not reflect the culture by choice or circumstances must either be rejected or assimilated. Thus, education is primarily the process by which individuals are assimilated through acculturation.

If the process of assimilation is ineffective and the society disintegrates, man must reconstruct a new social order upon different cultural elements. If he fails to perceive the disintegration or inadequately deals with the problem, the personality of the society will suffer from severe psychosis and the society will cease to function. The reader will remember from history that the inability of the individuals within the Holy Roman Empire to develop a communicable culture resulted in a series of internal upheavals which eventually led to the creation of new social orders based upon divergent cultural elements. (In this connection, it may be prudent to recall the old cliché that the Holy Roman Empire was not truly an empire, nor was it Roman, and by no standard could it be labeled holy.)

It has been previously stated that man creates cultures in order to survive. It is important to emphasize that the creator of culture is man and that the life of a society is rooted in its members. The previous remark that a society possesses a personality does not

mean to imply an organismic conception of society. The society does not exist as an entity separate from its members. It is its members. If the personality of the culture suffocates the personalities of the individuals within its boundaries, it will cut itself off from the very source of its life and will die. The history of the Spartan society after the "Great Refusal," when Spartan leaders began developing a "barracks state," is illustrative of this phenomenon of societal suicide. Cutting itself off from the dynamism of continuous regeneration by stifling creativity and innovation, the Spartans were unable to preserve the "life" of their culture. Atrophy set in and the death knell announced the demise of an already rigid corpse.

Two important conclusions relevant to an analysis of the educational endeavor can be drawn from the previous discussion. First, assimilation through acculturation is a central aim of education within all societies. If the formal or informal educational endeavor fails to bring about assimilation, the society will disintegrate. Second, if the society is over-assimilated and if education fails to preserve individual creative powers, it will also perish. The key to man's survival, therefore, is to discover the "happy mean" between sociological assimilation and the preservation of the individual's autonomy. The reason for the plethora of disagreements and discussions concerning major social, political, economic, and educational issues during the twentieth century, and indeed throughout man's brief history on this planet, is due to the fact that the "happy mean" between sociological assimilation and the preservation of individual autonomy cannot be readily identified. That which is identified by one man as "disintegration of society," another labels "individual freedom," and conversely, what is viewed by some as "assimilation," others identify as "destructive collectivism or groupism." When such conflicting views become the ideologies of warring factions, reason oftentimes cannot salve the resultant wounds.

The Birth of the School

As discussed in Chapter Three, in primitive societies the process of education is simple and informal. Aboriginal parents, assisted by the frequently disenchanted tribal priest, carry the burden of ensuring that their children will acquire the correct behavior

traits. What the young fail to learn about their culture from the parents and the priests they learn by observing and participating in tribal activities. In ancient times, the knowledge the tribe accumulated formed the aboriginal curriculum. As the pool of knowledge deepened and broadened, men, in their persistent search for order, developed a categorical system and the disciplines were born. As the categories of knowledge increased and as men acquired diverse and sophisticated ways of knowing, the task of educating was shared by an increasing number of specialists.

It is worthy of note that the development of knowledge is exponential in nature. Not only does the discovery of new knowledge increase the possibility of creating more knowledge (e.g., the discovery of systems of optics and the resultant discovery of the worlds hidden from man's limited perception), but it also is accompanied by an increase in the division of labor within social systems. The reader will remember from the discussion of roles in Chapter Four that as individuals assume more specialized roles, a growing complexity of behavioral expectations related to these roles are included within the body of knowledge to be transmitted to the individuals within the society. To illustrate the latter assertion, in the tribal society individuals who assumed roles related to political functions, such as members of tribal councils, were required to learn behavior patterns associated with their specialty. Not only did they generally have to wear distinct clothing, as do our court justices, but they also had to deal with individuals within the tribe according to specified rules and regulations. The well known "rites of passage" usually were followed by specified behavioral expectations. Some societies, such as the pre-communist Chinese society, developed extensive and detailed ceremonial patterns. Although modern societies lack these ceremonial expectations, they are characterized by an increase in specialization and a plethora of specific behavioral expectations due to roles and status. Individuals are expected to behave according to their roles and resultant normative expectancies. A successful librarian, for example, generally behaves according to different norms than does an airline stewardess. Although general behavioral expectations are not necessarily verbalized to the degree that are the norms of specified roles, every society has an unsung Amy Vanderbilt.

As social systems and systems of knowledge grew more complex, the informal educational process became inadequate and was

institutionalized through the creation of the school. Although the informal educational system continues to operate, the advent of the industrial revolution, the creation of nation-states, the migration of large groups of individuals from one society to another, the replacement of the extended family by the nuclear family, and the explosion of knowledge has caused the school to assume a more vital and central role in the process of acculturation. Yet to be resolved is the delineation of the educational responsibilities of the family, social and religious agencies, the school, and the recent arrival upon the educational scene, mass media. Whether the family's role in the educational endeavor will continue to decline as the culture becomes more homogenized will depend upon the nature of the evolving social structure and culture. What is evident, however, is that the school, the offspring of society, is assigned the major role in the task of acculturation. The school exists to teach the culture to the young so that they will "fit" within the society. It will be judged successful if the individuals attending it behave in a manner that reveals that they have internalized the essential elements of the culture. If they behave differently from the expectations determined by the cultural norms (the conscience of the society), they will be viewed as "criminal intruders" and the school's ability to perform its assigned task will be questioned. The teachers will have to successfully explain the *raison d'etre* for the school's apparent failure, reeducate their masters, migrate, or drink hemlock.

A question often cited and worthy of note is whether the school has a responsibility to change the social order. It is a moot question in a homogeneous society, for such a society preserves the life-sustaining umbilical cord between itself and the school by placing the school under the control of successfully acculturated individuals and by selecting teachers who reflect the cultural norms. The question is relevant, however, in a pluralistic society with a heterogeneous culture. In such a society, exemplified by the United States, the school may become the center to which divergent societal impulses may be focused. The Progressive Movement in American education, for example, reflected the progressive impulse that existed within certain segments of the society. Whether the school "ought" to assist in changing the social order is another matter, and the reader must arrive at his own conclusion.

The School As a Mirror of the Personality of the Society

As previously mentioned, assimilation through acculturation is an integral aspect of education in all societies. Each society, however, has a plethora of cultural ideals which are unique to it, as Kluckhohn has succinctly stated:

> Some of each child's wants are those common to all human animals. But each culture has its own scheme for the most desirable and the most approved ways of satisfying these needs.[1]

Each culture reflects central ideals which become the guiding principles for all societal activities. The previously mentioned Spartans, for example, prized physical rigor and obedience to the state, while the early American colonists in the New England Bible states valued spiritual rigor and obedience to the "Word of God."

Before taking a look at some twentieth century American ideals, the reader should be alerted to the fact that the "happy mean" between assimilation and the preservation of individual autonomy is usually located within a zone on a continuum that is determined by the culture. A totalitarian state emphasizes the assimilation factor, while a democratic state stresses the preservation of the autonomy of the individual. Also, not all societies have the same degree of integration. Modern industrial societies generally are more extended in size, include a greater diversity of peoples, and are based upon a variety of cultures. To deal with the phenomenon of "loose integration," assimilation assumes diverse forms and characteristics. The concept of nationalism, for example, was a significant factor during the emergence of modern mass societies, and its emotional expression of patriotism continues as a vital element in the process of assimilation.

The American Ideal of Individualism

Any attempt to identify specific cultural elements within a society as complex and pluralistic as the United States is filled with pitfalls. The following is solely an attempt to identify some general principles which follow from the ideal of individualism.

[1] Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1965), p. 171.

Rather than attempting to provide a brief definition of this concept, a task comparable to the search for the philosopher's stone, the following essential elements are provided to assist the reader in an understanding of the nature of individualism:

1. Groups are the sum total of individuals, and individuals are the primary agent, not the group *per se*.
2. Individuals are expected to deviate from adjusted patterns, although such deviations may be partially controlled by existing patterns.
3. The feelings, potential, and limitations of the individual are recognized and respected.
4. The individual is a source of creativity — the ability to discover meaningful ways to relate reality.
5. An individual's right to privacy and solitude is not abridged or denied.
6. Loyalty to a group must be derived from a desire to be part of a group and not from a desire for unity for its own sake.
7. Inner values and ideals that conflict with those of the majority of individuals within a group must be respected without threat of coercion for the purpose of assuring group cohesion.
8. The freedom to select friends and values cannot be abridged by forced "gladhandism."
9. A mature individual must be prepared to assume the responsibility of choosing his own goals.
10. An individual finds his own meaning within a group without being dependent upon it for security.

The "democratic creed" is rooted in the concept of individualism. Society enhances man's ability to become human. A basic American tenet which flows from the ideal of individualism is that the individual should be provided with the maximum opportunity to realize his potential. The social, political, and economic systems within the American society are defended on this basis.

In a political sense, individualism means that the individual is superior to the state and that the individuals who govern the state obtain their right to govern from the governed. The right of the majority is avowed, but, in order to protect the minority from the possible perfidy of the majority, the minority's rights are protected by law.

In the social sphere, individualism rests upon the concept of class mobility within a class society. The Marxist ideal of a classless society is rejected because it is thought to inhibit the individual's chances to achieve and be rewarded according to his ability and determination. Thus, the opportunity for migration from one class to another provides the rationale for the defense of the class structure. The often cited examples of "poverty to riches" reflect the conviction that a class society differs markedly from a caste system. The dominant middle class in American society sets the general patterns of behavioral expectations and, indeed, is the source of the essential elements that make up the culture. To be American in the fullest sense is to reflect middle class values.

The American democratic creed is expressed in the economic system labeled "capitalism." The right of the individual to earn according to his "ability" and to "gather to himself the goods of the earth" is viewed as the basis of an economic democracy. The right of private property belongs to both consumer and capitalist. As the industrial revolution progresses, the stock market is gradually replacing the small town market place as the symbol of a democratic economic system in action.

The above description of individualism as an American ideal is not intended to imply that the ideal is necessarily reflected in practice. Discrepancies often occur, and if they persist, they cause social crises. An illustration of such a pattern of unrest is the great labor upheaval during the decade following World War I. The widespread labor strikes resulted in part from the failure, and apparent inherent inability of the existing capitalistic system to provide equality of economic opportunity. While the rich were increasing their wealth, the poor remained in poverty, and the workers demanded that the ideals upheld by the society be put into practice. Eventually, alterations were made in the existing capitalistic system, accompanied by an extension of federal government activity in the economic domain.

The Negro sit-ins and marches of the sixties provide another vivid example of the crisis that results when a social system fails to implement the ideals that are integral to its culture. Because a significant segment of the populace, led by the august Supreme Court (the institutionalized conscience of the society), realized that our avowed devotion to political equality and equality of

opportunity was ludicrous in comparison with current social practices, the implementation of much-needed reforms was demanded.

The dilemma concerning whether "American democratic ideals" can indeed be implemented in a modern mass society has been the source of diverse tracts and tomes. A study of the concepts of economic freedom, social class, and political equality, when placed in juxtaposition, presents various perplexing questions. Can economic freedom, with its obvious correlate that some will be richer than others, exist simultaneously with political equality whereby each man has an equal voice in the process of operating his government? Indeed, more basic questions are: Can the ideals implied by sociological assimilation and the preservation of individualism be realized simultaneously? and Can equality exist in any sphere of human activity when nature appears to have been rather remiss in distributing assets and liabilities? The advocates of the "democratic creed" generally answer these frustrating questions in the affirmative. The ideals are not only viewed as theoretically compatible but also capable of being effectively implemented. This American faith is derived, in part, from a belief in our capacity to affect our future and the concurrent rejection of the concept of an overpowering *destino*. Our faith in nurture overshadows our fear of the limitations imposed upon us by nature. Indeed, we can reflect upon man's past journey and argue that he is ornery enough to succeed. From the day when he arose from the primeval muck to the present hour, he has confounded the gods.

This American faith in man's eventual success is also based upon our conviction that education is the panacea that will overcome his organic limitations. It is reflected in Thomas Jefferson's letter to George Wythe in 1786. He asserted: "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness."[2]

The Tasks of the School

The school in American society is assigned two central tasks: (1) the assimilation by acculturation of the neophytes within the society, and (2) the preservation of the autonomy of the indi-

[2] Gordon C. Lee (ed.), *Crusade Against Ignorance* (Richmond, Va.: The William Byrd Press, 1962), p. 99.

vidual in a mode reflective of the ideal of individualism discussed above. The assertion that assimilation by acculturation is a central task of the school does not mean that the school rejects the goal of education for world society mentioned in Chapter One. The nation-state is linked with the world community. Nationalism and internationalism are not mutually exclusive. Acculturation will include elements which relate to the world community. As assimilation in the American nation-state implies an acceptance of the social unit labeled *family,* it also may include the goal of integrating the young into the world community.

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the difficulty of accomplishing these ends in twentieth century American society; it will also identify some difficulties encountered by the schools in their attempts to fulfill their two central tasks. The failure to bring about effective sociological assimilation will be viewed in reference to ethnic and social class differences. The failure to implement some of the ideals of individualism will be analyzed by focusing upon the social forces that threaten the autonomy of individuals by fragmenting their identity. Individuals who are thus sociologically non-assimilated and/or psychologically fragmented may be said to be suffering from alienation.

Alienation in American Society

The meaning of the word "alienation" is elusive; a cursory examination of its use shows that a variety of definitions abound. For the purpose of this chapter, however, it will be defined as a separation or a sense of separation from one's "real self" or from other human beings with whom the individual interacts. An individual is alienated if he cannot fathom his own "within" or his identity as a person. He is also alienated if he is unable to effectively communicate with other human beings within his environment. Both forms of alienation prevent the individual from being or feeling "human"; they keep him from becoming an integrated whole capable of interchanging cognitive and affective energies with other persons in his environment. The two forms of alienation that will be focused upon are (1) alienation resulting from the failure of assimilation, which will be labeled *sociological alienation,* and (2) alienation that results from the loss of

an individual's autonomy, that is, the fragmentation of the self, which will be called *psychological alienation*.

These two forms of alienation have diverse causes, but two basic causes can be identified. First, alienation that results from *nature* (e.g., congenital mental retardation), and secondly, that which results from *nurture* (e.g., cultural deviation).

Sociological Alienation

In order to be assimilated within the American society, a foreign-born individual must not only effectively adjust to the general American cultural patterns and ideals but he must also be integrated within the dominant social class, the middle class. Thus, to be assimilated within the American society, an individual must successfully perform inter-societal migration by adopting the cultural norms of his new native country, and he must also successfully migrate from the lower socio-economic class to the dominant middle class. The success of intra-societal migration towards the middle class is due in great measure to the degree in which an individual internalizes the general cultural norms (e.g., the democratic creed). Unless he completes both forms of migration, he remains an alien. The schema shown in Figure 2 represents the phenomenon of assimilation.

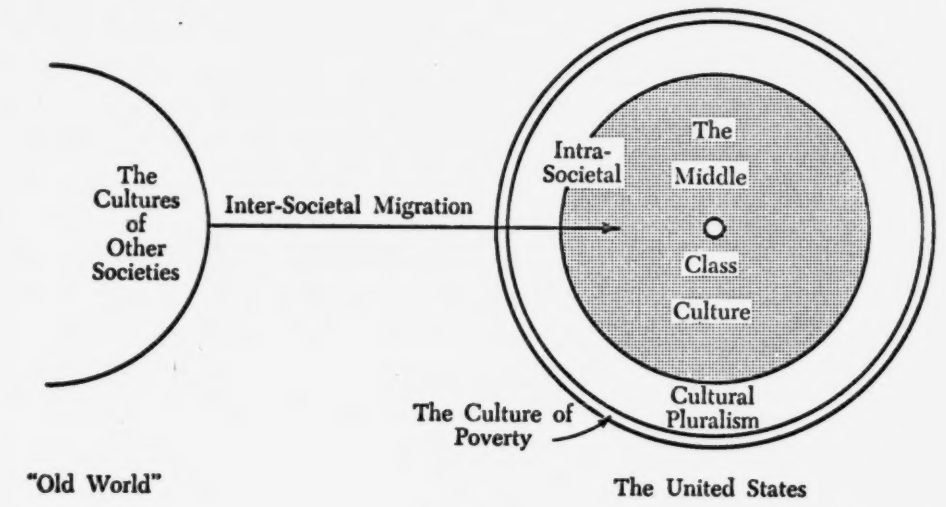


FIGURE 2

The Process of Cultural Assimilation

Successful assimilation implies that an individual migrating from an "Old World" society eventually becomes an acceptable member of the middle class. In other words, in order to become "an American," an immigrant must often migrate through the lowest, poorest social class, through a society composed of separate but not equal ethnic groups, and eventually assume a somewhat stable position within the middle class. Thus, many individuals must divest themselves of a variety of normative elements and expectations derived from the "Old World" culture, accept and eventually reject the culture of poverty, sustain a transformed ethnic culture, and ultimately internalize middle class values and behavioral expectations. Not all aliens need pass through all of the areas identified in Figure 2, however. The speed and nature of assimilation within the middle class society rest in part upon the similarity and dissimilarity between the original and the adopted culture. An Englishman, for example, may migrate directly from the "Old World" culture into middle class American society. Also, an individual may be native to the American society and yet remain within the outer core of the middle class societal milieu. Although assimilation can be obtained by extending the middle class culture to include subcultural elements by diversifying acceptable normative elements and modifying behavioral expectations, the process generally rests upon a conscious attempt to acculturate the aliens to existing patterns.

The Immigrants. As far back as the founding of the American Republic the problem imposed by inter-societal migration has been of central concern to the schools. The United States, being a nation composed of immigrants and the progeny of immigrants, faced a somewhat unique struggle to achieve assimilation. Unable to develop a sense of attachment to the elusive concept, "fatherland," the cohesive force which was to unite the American people was the religion of democracy. As the immigrants arrived on the American shores from diverse lands and cultures, they were gathered into the educational ladle, the public school system, and dipped into the great Melting Pot. Thus, a form of nationalism, rooted in the democratic creed and taught in the English language, was the unifying agent. The American form of assimilation was based upon the assumption that as ethnic differences disappeared

the "American type" would be generated. The school was assigned the task of amalgamating and Americanizing the peoples of the "New Jerusalem." It is important to note that the so-called "American type" (a term reflective of the middle class culture) was not truly an amalgam but rather a microcosmic mirror that reflected the "evolved" culture introduced by the earliest immigrants. Could it be that the Melting Pot was to produce a fuzzy replica of an Englishman?

The offspring of many of the immigrants, especially those of second and third generations, with assistance from the public school, successfully overthrew the subcultures of the ethnic ghettoes and entered the middle class society. Though the public school watched with deep satisfaction the Americanization of the neophytes, there was often a conscious and unconscious opposition

Inter-societal migrants. An Italian family at Ellis Island; 1905.

to such a process on the part of the immigrants. The ethnic ghettoes the immigrants frequently established reflected their understandable fear of becoming isolated aliens within the yet-to-be-internalized adopted culture. The family social unit often became the focal point of the pressure to resist acculturation.

In recent years a new concept appeared which challenges the Melting Pot idea of assimilation. The advocates of this concept, "cultural pluralism," want to preserve ethnic differences. Cultural pluralism implies that the diverse cultures which are represented by the variety of ethnic groups who settled on the American soil should be preserved and protected from the process of cultural diffusion. Thus, as oil and water placed within one container do not mix, the diverse cultures would be contained by one nation but would not be adulterated by each other.

Although cultural pluralism continues to exist for a limited period after the arrival and settlement of immigrants, it rarely endures beyond the third generation. When it does exist, it usually does not permeate the middle class society. The values and behavioral expectations reflected by the members of the middle class are remarkably similar. Although minor ideological differences often result in controversy, these differences result primarily because the middle class culture is a hybrid culture.

Although cultural pluralism appears to be more suited to a pluralistic and democratic society, its workability in twentieth century America is questionable. Would members of the diverse ethnic groups have equal access to the rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, or would those individuals whose cultures more closely resemble that of the individuals who have already reached the top have a better chance of economic success? Would such an approach to the assimilation process result in centers of highly homogeneous subcultures, preventing the development of a suitable all-encompassing culture that would be adequate to sustain order within society? Also, the problem of cultural suitability is of central concern. A culture that has evolved within environmental conditions radically different from those found in America and within a different historical context cannot be "transplanted" without significant alterations. The colonists who arrived in the seventeenth century, for example, although dedicated to the preservation of the culture of their fathers, were forced to transform

integral elements to adjust to the frontier environment of their adopted homeland. Although the culture of the nascent American society was quite similar to its English antecedent, it was also significantly different from it, because of the pressure of environmental factors. Illustrative of this assertion is the breakdown of the apprenticeship system in the early colonies.

In spite of the diverse approaches to an understanding of assimilation, however, the fact is that assimilation must occur if the society is to be preserved. It is only the form the assimilation should take which remains in dispute.

The American Indians. The original inhabitants of the land, the American Indians, are in the rather paradoxical position of being aliens in their own land. During the early years of colonization by the Europeans, sporadic yet zealous missionary attempts to assimilate the Indians were made. The names of early agencies dedicated to the task of assimilation, such as the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, betray the commitment to Christianize the red man. Because of the Indians' courageous stamina in resisting the pressures to destroy their cultures, and because of the federal government's policy of segregating the Indians under the guise of federal protection, however, they continue to be sociologically alienated from the "American" culture. Under the government's policy of *de facto* apartheid, our aborigines remain outside the middle class culture and often outside the economic structure. Whether the Indian eventually will obtain the recognition he deserves for his unique status and ways remains to be seen. The pseudo-recognition he receives by visitors on holiday when he is encouraged to display the exotic aspects of his culture is an American tragedy.

The American Negro. The American Negro, involuntarily brought to these shores shortly after the arrival of the first settlers, remained in slavery throughout the early centuries of our history. Treated as property and deprived of control over his own destiny until the mid-1860's, he was unable to preserve his African cultures or to develop an American Negro culture, since slavery inhibits the development of culture. Once freed, he was prevented from being assimilated into the middle class society and forced to

become a part of the social class which reflected the culture of economic deprivation.

The assertion that there does not exist an American Negro culture is not meant to imply that Negro citizens have not contributed significantly to the American culture. It merely means that the shading of one's skin cannot be the cause of the creation of a culture. Admittedly, the behavioral expectations that result from the perception of "color" as a significant factor may result in *some* shared ways of behaving. However, such shared ways, unless combined with various other factors, do not bring about the creation of a culture. The poor Negro who inhabits an agrarian southern community more closely resembles his white brother living in similar circumstances than other Negroes living in a more affluent environment. (The reason that the American Negro is "different" is not because of nature but rather because of nurture. He is different solely because nurture has caused some individuals to *perceive* color as a relevant determiner of human patterns of interaction. Thus, an insignificant but visible characteristic has forced *some* Negroes to remain within the lowest socioeconomic class.)

Recent developments seem to indicate that certain Negroes, deprived of middle class status and forced to live within a class identified by economic deprivation, are seeking to establish a subculture which, indeed, would serve as a protector in a hostile world. Thus a minority of Negroes have adopted the Muslim faith, along with selected elements from African cultures. That this new lifestyle will free them from the culture of poverty is questionable.

The Poor. The most readily identified as alienated because of social class are the poor. (One could argue that the very rich [see Figure 2], are equally alienated from the middle class as the members of the American international jet set have demonstrated. But the society in general and the members of that subgroup are not about to make their alienation an educational issue.)

Often deprived of political equality and frequently prevented by circumstance from moving out of the lowest socioeconomic class, the poor have failed to implement the concept of assimilation. John Steinbeck's vivid descriptions of the poverty of the inhabitants of the Dust Bowl during the thirties and the recent exposés of the plight of the peoples of Appalachia and of the migrant

A poor white family of Appalachia.

Negro child in slum.

Farmer and son await relief check.

workers of California, Florida, and other fruit- and vegetable-growing areas offer moving accounts of the appalling suffering imposed by poverty.

The culture of poverty is fashioned with its own set of values and behavioral expectations. As the values of all cultures represent methods of survival in a hostile environment, the values of the poor are designed to enable them to survive in a sociologically hostile world.

Because of the nature of technological change which increasingly creates a demand for skilled workers, and the need to make effective use of the formal educational process, the poor have been stratified within a class that closely resembles a caste. The school has become the agency which may best serve to liberate the individuals involuntarily enslaved by economic deprivation, but, unfortunately, it includes elements which inhibit its attempt to successfully accomplish the task of assimilating these individuals. As an agency of the middle class society, the school sets middle class goals and expectations for the students, and achievement and external reward depend upon the degree to which these values are learned and internalized. The problem goes beyond that of learning to read, write, and compute, as Talcott Parsons has observed:

> The criteria of the achievement are generally speaking, undifferentiated into the cognitive and technical component and the moral or 'social' component. But with respect to its bearing on societal values, it is broadly a differentiation of levels of capacity to act in accord with these values.[3]

The road to advancement within the societal milieu increasingly depends upon the school's capacity to provide the maximum educational opportunity for all its students. As pointed out in Chapter 2, the goal of equalizing educational opportunity cannot be easily achieved. The problem is being tackled by an increasingly active federal government and by many educators committed to unearthing the roots of the dilemma. The recent increase in federal monies for education is due, in part, to the desire to assist the poor in becoming assimilated into the middle class. Whether

[3] Talcott Parsons, "The School as a Social System," *Harvard Educational Review* (Fall, 1959), p. 300.

a similar attempt will be made to develop a more heterogeneous culture which will include the values of groups peripheral to the middle class remains to be seen. According to Horatio Ulibarri,

> The schools have been complacent to a large degree in presenting only a small aspect of the American culture, namely, the middle-class values and orientations, as the sum total of the curricula in the schools.[4]

The effectiveness of the school in assimilating the children and youth of lower socioeconomic classes will depend upon the empathy of the teachers and the opportunity for cross-cultural contact. Teachers must also be prepared to accept prescribed innovations which are not solely based upon sound analyses of existing situations and needed reform, but also based upon a courageous attempt to remove the middle class "tunnel vision" of reality.

Other Sociologically Alienated Groups. The school, of course, must also continue its task of assimilating all of the neophytes for, indeed, all children are born alien to society. Even the task of assimilating children of middle class parents into the middle class society is difficult and frustrating. As the culture evolves with increasing rapidity and as the institutions within the society are altered to "fit" technological advances, the task of assimilation requires greater wisdom and finesse. Assimilation in twentieth century America implies that an individual must not only fit into the existing society but must also be capable of fitting himself into a society which, as yet, does not exist and cannot be accurately described.

Before turning to the problem of psychological alienation which follows, the reader should be aware that there are various other types of sociological alienation that are relevant to the educational endeavor. Those individuals, for example, stigmatized by a physical or emotional handicap, often unsuccessfully struggle to be assimilated within the society, while artists and intellectuals must perpetually struggle to feel a sense of belonging in a society characterized by a reward system based upon static norms and rigid

[4] Horatio Ulibarri, "Teacher Awareness of Sociocultural Differences in the Multicultural Classrooms," *Sociology and Social Research* (October, 1960), p. 49.

determinants of achievement. Although the special problems of handicapped and gifted children have received increasing recognition among educators in recent years, they are still given too little attention in many school systems.

Psychological Alienation

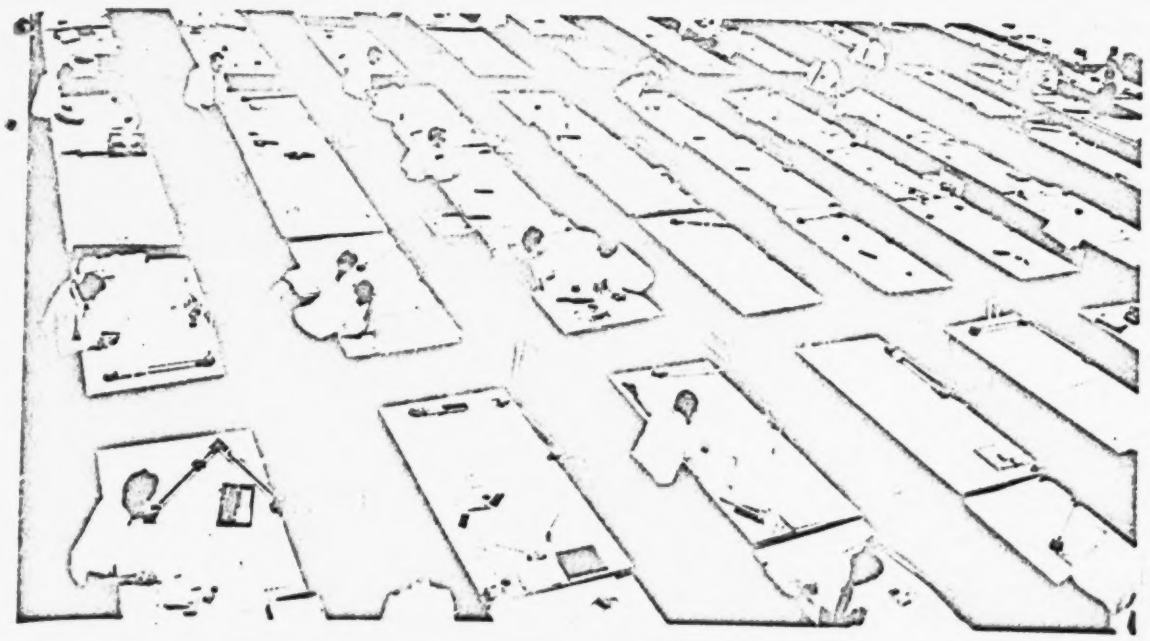
We must point out at the outset of this discussion of psychological alienation that sociological alienation and psychological alienation cannot, in fact, be readily separated; often they are concomitant.

Psychological alienation exists when an individual fails to preserve or to develop his autonomy. He becomes solely a conditioned reactor rather than a free actor within the societal milieu; he cannot internalize the elements of individualism listed in an earlier section of this chapter. Psychological alienation results, in part, from the inability of an individual to cope with the mass, corporate society. Indeed, the fragmentation of identity often results from the demands imposed upon an individual by a society revolutionized by technological advances. As Fromm says, "Man has created a world of man-made things as it never existed before. He has constructed a complicated social machine to administer the technical machine he built."[5]

In the following pages we will describe briefly some of the aspects of twentieth century American society which have encouraged the development of psychological alienation.

The Isolation of the Worker. The nature of our industrialized society has greatly limited the individual's opportunity to share cognitive and affective energies with other human beings (a vital factor in developing and sustaining an awareness of one's identity). The centralization of the giants of the industrial world has generated the megalopolis and isolated industrial parks. Thus, the worker, a veritable gypsy, is forced to migrate perpetually between the suburban community where he lives and the great cities of Babel surrounding the industrial towers of the twentieth century where he works. As a result of this phenomenon, he frequently

[5] Erich Fromm, "Alienation under Capitalism," in *Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society,* eds. Eric Josephson and Mary Josephson (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), p. 59.



Drafting engineers. Even highly trained men can seem insignificant in a large company like this one.

cannot develop meaningful interactions with other human beings. Indeed, he cannot communicate. Max Lerner, in describing the character of the American city dweller, writes:

> It has been psychologically hardened by innumerable brief encounters — in public schools, on subways and buses, in restaurants, in the course of shopping — which would become intolerable if one did not sheathe oneself against them with a constricted response.[6]

Thus, the modern urbanite-suburbanite often cannot discover meaning within his fluid community. He encounters his family for brief interludes; his home often resembles a boarding house; and his neighborhood, with its well-paved streets and well-mowed lawns, seems to lack the movement and feeling of "real life."

As he moves to the suburbs to regain contact with nature, he shortens his days by increasing the "lost hours" enroute between home and office or factory. Eventually, the tentacles of the ravenous megalopolis will reach out and encompass his new haven. Indeed, in his sense of alienation, the modern American resembles Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He, however, differs from

[6] Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 168.

his ancestors who consumed the "forbidden fruit" because he suffers from the realization that he has chopped down the "tree of life" and replaced it with a parking lot.

A highly industrialized society is also characterized by an increase in the division of labor. Both the white-collar and the blue-collar worker are required to perform a highly specialized and often monotonous task, and instead of working cooperatively with others in a joint endeavor, each works alone, separated from the opportunity for meaningful interaction with fellow workers. He is also deprived of the satisfaction of releasing his creative urge; unlike the skilled worker-artist of bygone days, the modern worker seldom experiences the joy of seeing the results of his special, individual labor in the finished product. He realizes, too, that the product will soon be obsolete and, even more discouraging, that his job may become obsolete — that automation may soon invade his domain and replace him.

The Fragmentation of the Self. As the role relationships within the corporate structure become more complex and static, the worker must assume a pattern of behavior which is determined by the needs of an efficiency-oriented sub-social system. Indeed, the autonomous, inner-directed individual so vividly described by David Riesman is often viewed as a liability in the corporate world. The mass society appears to rest upon the shoulders of the other-directed man, who is willing to perform in accordance with the variety of behavioral expectations of the corporate society. Eventually, however, this individual begins to see himself only through the roles he plays, and his identity becomes fragmented. He may be an industrial worker, a union steward, a member of the bowling league, but never an integrated whole — a man.

Besides having his name replaced by his social security number as the badge of his identity, the worker's integrity and his right to privacy are curtailed by a barrage of "psychological" tests which he is required to complete in order to assure that he will find his "proper place" in the complex maze of a bureaucratic, industrial complex.

The Search for Stability. Since man is a moral agent who can transcend himself, he perpetually seeks guidelines for his judgments and actions. In order to "be," he must be free to make

choices, but to make choices, he must have alternatives from which to choose. In twentieth century America, however, as the culture has become more homogenized, and as diverse normative elements have become integral to the culture, values have become increasingly nebulous. Without identifiable values or norms, the quest for identity becomes more chaotic and frustrating.

The prevailing social philosophy of relativism also tends to increase psychological alienation. The ancient Aristotelian search for truth, the scholastic search for truth, and the Newtonian search for natural laws have been replaced by a relativistic concept of reality, which has as its focus the process of critical thinking. Although this development has led to a more rational understanding of reality, it often results in destructive skepticism.

Another factor which, in some ways, has led to a diminishing sense of self is the growth of science. As we probe into the universe, our search for identity is confounded by the realization that we are microscopic creatures within our own galaxy. We can but muse over the possible psychological effects of our sojourn into space and the resultant realization that we are but specks upon a speck within a gargantuan complex ocean.

The School and Alienation

The school must ensure that the ideal of individualism be sustained while adequately preparing individuals to fit into the modern mass corporate society. The manner in which it will meet its task will determine, in part, the nature of the future social order. The way in which the school has tackled its tasks in the past has been generally reactive rather than initiative; it has usually awaited cues from the society. The rest of this section provides a possible pattern by which the school could (not necessarily "should") deal with the two basic forms of alienation.

The present educational endeavor contains the threads of this pattern: (1) the integration of individuals within the schools who are alienated because of *nurture* so that they will be assimilated into the adult society, and (2) the segregation of individuals within the schools who are alienated because of *nature* for the same purpose — social assimilation. Thus, when society is responsible for the alienation, the aliens may be integrated within the school. The development of the comprehensive school, for example, results in the integration of individuals from diverse eth-

nic groups and social classes. Also, the recent Supreme Court rulings in which the "separate but equal" approach to race relations has been reversed implies the concept "integration in school for assimilation in society."

Individuals who are alienated because of nature, on the other hand, may be separated from their non-alienated peers in order to become a part of special programs for their benefit. The development of the field of exceptional education is an example of this practice. Thus, by specializing the instruction of the exceptional child, he is being assisted in dealing with a "maladjustment" imposed upon him by nature.

The above pattern for dealing with alienated children and youth, needless to say, is not clearly defined, nor is it universally accepted by educators. It has been introduced here solely as a point of departure for further analysis and discussion. The problems presented by such a scheme are many. First, the differences between nature and nurture cannot be clearly distinguished. Second, the ideals of the society must be reflected in practice. For example, should the gifted child be sectioned within the school? If one answers in the affirmative, he may be labeled anti-democratic for advocating an elitist concept of education. On the other hand, if his reply is negative, he can also be labeled undemocratic, for the integration of a gifted child with "normal" children could imply that the former would not be granted an opportunity to make maximum use of his special abilities.

Conclusion

A final word should be added concerning the nature of the dilemma of alienation. Although the previous assertions may seem to indicate that modern man is a failure, the opposite is, perhaps, closer to the truth. The very fact that he can ask himself questions dealing with his own identity and his place within the universe is evidence of success in other areas of life. The reader may recall that man's journey through history has involved a persistent struggle to meet his most basic needs in a very hostile physical environment. Today, in twentieth century America, because most of us have succeeded so well in providing for our primary physical wants, we are now free to search for greater fulfillment. The

malaise of this age may therefore be attributed not only to our complex social order, but also to the increase of leisure time during which we can ask ourselves the questions a great majority of our ancestors were not able to formulate.

In other words, though we cannot deny that modern man is maladjusted, we must agree with M.V.C. Jeffreys that

> It is because man is maladjusted that he is unique in Nature. From his maladjustment — evident in the chasm between aspiration and capacity, vision and performance — spring all the distinctively human activities; scientific inquiry, artistic creation, philosophical speculation, and — the supporting condition of them all — historical experience.[7]

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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